

**JAMES M. PROCACCINI, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ESTATE OF JILL  
PROCACCINI v. LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, et al., AC 38380**  
*Judicial District of New London at New London*

**Wrongful Death; Whether Plaintiff Proved that Patient's Death by Methadone Overdose Caused by Doctor's Negligence; Whether Award of Noneconomic Damages for Loss of Ability to Enjoy Life Proper Absent Evidence of Decedent's Life Expectancy.** Jill Procaccini died of a methadone overdose hours after being discharged from the emergency department at Lawrence & Memorial hospital. She was discharged less than five hours after arriving at the hospital showing symptoms of opiate overdose. Procaccini's estate (the plaintiff) brought this wrongful death action against the emergency department doctor's medical group claiming that her death was caused by the doctor's negligence. The plaintiff claimed that the doctor prematurely discharged Procaccini after wrongly concluding that she had overdosed on heroin and wrongly concluding that her symptoms were unrelated to methadone use. At trial, the plaintiff's medical expert testified that, because a methadone overdose can cause a delayed depression of the respiratory system, a patient who has overdosed on methadone should remain under observation for 24 hours. The jury returned a verdict in favor of the plaintiff and awarded \$512,000 in damages. The defendant medical group appeals, claiming that, based on the evidence that the plaintiff presented at trial, the jury could not have reasonably concluded that the doctor's negligence caused Procaccini's death. The defendant argues that the jury could have only speculated as to whether the failure to admit Procaccini to the hospital caused her death or, for that matter, whether Procaccini overdosed on methadone before or after she was discharged from the emergency department. The defendant also claims that there was insufficient evidence to support the jury's award of \$150,000 in damages to compensate for Procaccini's loss of her capacity to enjoy life's activities where the jury heard no evidence as to her life expectancy.